

These Minutes Have Not Yet Been Approved

BOARD OF FINANCE  
Town of Essex  
29 West Avenue  
Essex, CT 06426  
Via Remote & In Person- 7:00 p.m.  
Conference Room A

**MINUTES**

Thursday February 17, 2022

**Members in Attendance:** Ethan Goller, Brian Weinstein, Keith Crehan, Mary-Louise Polo, Campbell Hudson

**Others in Attendance:** Norman Needleman-First Selectman  
Tracey Celentano- Finance Director  
Danielle Sanso- Recording Clerk  
Kelly Sterner

**Absent:** Vincent Pacileo III

The meeting was called to order at 7:03 PM by Chairman Keith Crehan.

**1. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA:**

*Ethan Goller made a motion to approve the agenda, Seconded by Brian Weinstein. Passed unanimously. Motion carried.*

**2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: REGULAR BOF MEETING ON JANUARY 20, 2022**

*Mary-Louise Polo indicated a correction on page 3, ARPA Summary paragraph to modify the sentence (Delete "Throughout trainings and attended webinars for") begin with The police vehicle and fire marshal's vehicle are going to be classified through revenue loss because they are capital projects.*

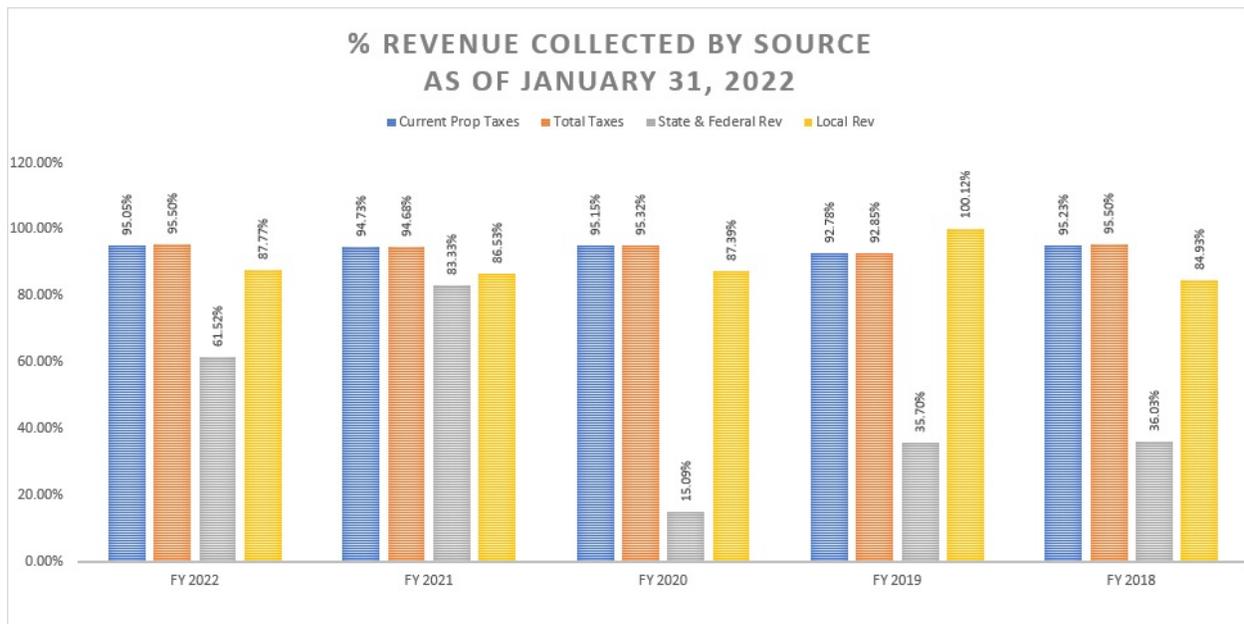
*Mary Louise-Polo made a motion to approve the minutes (as amended) from the January 20, 2022 meeting, Seconded by Brian Weinstein. Passed unanimously. Motion carried.*

**3. FINANCIAL REPORTS:**

**a. ESTIMATED JANUARY YTD UPDATE**

**REVENUES**

Finance Director Tracey Celentano presented the financial report to the Board.



The current tax collection results at the end of January is an early indicator of how our tax collections will finish the year. For FY 2022, January current property tax collections totaled \$6.92 million which brings us to a collection rate of 95.05% and compares favorably with prior fiscal years. Prior year collection rates and interest and liens accounted for \$5K for the month

As of January month-end, the YTD total tax collections were \$23,150,920 or 95.50% of the fiscal year total compared to 94.68% as of January 2021 and 95.32% as of January 2020. February 1<sup>st</sup> is the last day to pay without penalty and added another 9407K of tax collections. State Revenue in January consisted of \$30.9K for State Education Grant and Town Aid Road Grant totaling \$107.9K Local revenues totaled \$96.1K in January and \$529.4K (87.77% collected) YTD, which are slightly higher than the prior two years. Town Clerk Fees and Conveyance Taxes continue to trend above positively. As of the end of January, Conveyance Tax Fees exceeded the full budget amount by \$84K. Town Clerk Fees collected are at 87% of budget in January with five months remaining. Total revenues collected came in at 93.57% of budget versus 93.59% for January 2021 and 93.20% for January 2020 month end. As mentioned in the last meeting, both Conveyance and Town Clerk Fees are expected to level off.

**EXPENDITURES**

Expenditures for the month of January totaled \$1,941,712 bringing spending YTD to \$16,412,071 or 63.95% of budget. Selectmen's budget expenditures made up \$662,298 of the total spending. As of January month-end, the Selectmen's budget spending YTD is

\$5,957,624 or 67.38% of budget compared to 64.80% as of January 2021 and 63.80% at January 2020 month-end, For the month. payroll and fringe benefits accounted for \$232.4K of the monthly spending. This makes up 35% of the Selectmen's budget spending for the month. The \$357,500 transfer for the FY 21-22 allocation to Sinking Funds was also completed in January representing 53.5% of the Selectman's budget expenditures for the month. We anticipate February will reflect the multiple snow events we have been experiencing.

***Keith Crehan made a motion to accept the financial report as presented, Seconded by Ethan Goller. Passed unanimously. Motion carried.***

**b. ARPA FINAL RULING: REVENUE LOSS - STANDARD ALLOWANCE METHOD**

***Ethan Goller made a motion to approve and recommend to Town Meeting the irrevocable acceptance of the ARPA funds in the amount of \$1,973,399 as revenue loss utilizing the standard allowance provision as permitted by the US Treasury under the Final Rule. Such funds would be used to pay for general government services during the period of performance which must be obligated by December 31, 2024 and expended by December 31, 2026. Government Services expenditures utilizing ARPA funds will be reviewed and approved by the Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance and, as needed, voted on at a Town Meeting duly held for that purpose. Seconded by Mary-Louise Polo. Passed unanimously. Motion carried.***

**4. SELECTMEN'S REPORT**

First Selectman Norman Needleman reported the Durham Ambulance had been purchased by Middlesex Hospital and Hunters Ambulance was purchased by Hartford Healthcare. Middlesex Hospital is concerned that there will be a diversion of patients to the Hartford facility. He said that there is a general recognition that over time fire and EMS employees are going to end up paid employees versus volunteers. Essex Ambulance has already hired two people on the day shift. It is important for the Town of Essex to ensure both the Essex Fire Engine Com. #01 and Essex Ambulance are well equipped and have sufficient funds for operations.

Norman states the Town has been prudent with the distribution of ARPA money funds. BOS/BOF will need to tackle the issue of premium pay compensation of frontline workers as the Police Union has inquired. This is a complex issue but believes the solution may be to give a lump sum to the fire department and ambulance and let them figure out the best use and distribution method.

The budget process is moving along. The Selectman's Budget is currently proposing a 2.77% increase but will be modified in upcoming BOS/BOF meetings. Region 4 reflects a 1.02% decrease due to \$700K of debt service "falling off". Currently, FY22-23 Town and BOE budgets reflect a 1.51% increase combined. Norman also discussed the grand list growth

These Minutes Have Not Yet Been Approved

primarily being due to the increase motor vehicle values. The Assessor identified the ability to have two mill rates: one for Motor Vehicles and one for Real Estate/Personal Property. Incorporating dual mill rates will be researched to ensure fair and consistent taxes.

The Town of Essex has received a Community Connectivity Grant for \$595,611 to begin the sidewalk project along River Road. The Town is also researching grants to complete a replace the bridge as the State has defined the bridge in “poor” condition. The plan is to use a rapid replacement bridge which means that they will come in pull out the bridge and put in another quickly to ensure public safety.

The Fire department has applied for grants to support purchasing of radio enhancements for the state radio system and air packs.

**5. OLD BUSINESS**

None

**6. NEW BUSINESS**

None

**7. COMMUNICATIONS AND CORRESPONDENCE**

None

**8. PUBLIC COMMENT**

No public comment

**9. ADJOURNMENT**

***Keith Crehan made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:52 PM, Seconded by Ethan Goller. Passed unanimously. Motion carried.***

Respectfully Submitted,



Danielle Sanso  
Recording Clerk